

Sacramento Bike Hikers Safety Policy

SAFETY is an unwavering priority of the Sacramento Bike Hikers cycling club. Our riders are diverse in experience, time in the saddle, and reason for riding, as well as skills and abilities. As a social/recreational club, we seek to be inclusive and welcoming, and to provide new as well as seasoned riders with education and training to create **competent and safe riding habits** on the road and on the trail.

We are a cycling club whose members agree, in writing, to ride in accordance with the safe riding guidelines adopted by the organization and to conform and commit to cycling safely on group rides.

To that end we offer:

- Experienced ride leaders who work to create and maintain a safe riding culture
 - Quick reference guide handouts for each member and guest
 - Safety information and video links on our web site
 - Training events for members conducted by instructors who are certified by The League of American Bicyclists
 - Mentor cyclists who help new members on-board with the club
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Sacramento Bike Hikers Safety Guidelines

1. Bike Control

Skillfully control the bike by safely starting, stopping, signaling and maneuvering at the ride start/end, at intersections, on the trail/street, and where riders gather. Maintain control and focus at all times. Be predictable.

- **Maintain Control and Ride Defensively**
 - **Start** by using the Power Pedal position in a low gear. Station the start foot high on the crank so you can push hard to accelerate quickly with force.
 - **Stop** by moving into a lower gear and signaling to stop. Once stopped, put a foot down and raise the other pedal in preparation to start again in the Power Pedal position.
 - **Ascend** by planning ahead for hills and proactively shifting into lower gears.
 - **Descend** at a speed appropriate for maintaining control of the bike. Lean into and brake before curves. Use a feather braking technique, lightly touching and releasing the brake pressure.

- **Look for motorists** to do the unexpected. Children and families on the trail can also be unpredictable. Know how you plan to respond to common human error.
- **Communicate to others** using hand signals and verbally call out as needed. (signals detailed under communication)
- **Focus**
 - Minimize conversation.
 - Anticipate actions of others and mentally prepare for evasive action.
 - Practice active scanning.
 - Hold your line. Cycle in a straight line and be predictable.

2. Follow Rules

By law, cyclists are bound by the same rules as motor vehicles. Obey all traffic laws, signs, signals and use the correct lanes.

- **Stop at all Signs/Signals.** Many cyclists do not adhere to this law so be prepared for unpredictable behavior. As the hand signal for “Slowing” is the same as “Stopping”, call out your intention.
- **Pass on the LEFT.**
- Give **Right of Way** to pedestrians.
- Observe the **Speed Limits.**
- Do not let a driver wave you forward as other motorists/cyclists may be left unaware. Motorists are attempting to be helpful but do not know the hazards they are inadvertently creating. Smile and decline using a non-verbal. Shake your head NO or wave them through. Be assertive.
- Do not ride in the turn or merge lane unless merging or turning at intersections.
- Never touch another rider when cycling.

3. Communication

Be alert, predictable and proactive. Make sure that drivers, other cyclists, and pedestrians know where you are and what maneuver you are about to take. Be friendly, use hand signals and other non-verbals (such as putting your foot down when stopping, looking over your shoulder for lane change) and call-outs to alert others to what to expect from you. Clear communication promotes a positive image of the club as well as safety. Call out hazards, directions and unseen traffic/riders. **Do not call out “clear”** as what looks clear for you may change quickly for a rider behind you.

Examples of good communication:

- **Hand Signals** are used to relay information non-verbally. If it is unsafe to take your hands off the handlebars, verbally call out your communications.
 - **Turning Left** – Raise the left arm to the side parallel to the ground pointing to the left.
 - **Turning Right** – Raise the right arm to the side parallel to the ground pointing to the right. Alternatively, raise the left elbow out to the side with the arm bent upward.

- **Obstruction/debris** - Point toward the object.
- **Bump or hole in the road** – Point toward the object in a circling fashion.
- **Going around** an object, car or person – Make a scooping motion, front to back.
- **Slowing/stopping** – Point the left arm down with the elbow out and the palm facing back. Call out which signal you are doing.
- **Moving Forward** – Wave your hand straight forward overhead.
- **Calling out directions or hazards** front-to-back and back-to-front through line of cyclists is a way to communicate to all riders.
 - Call out **“On your Left”** when passing.
 - Call out **“Car Back”, “Bike Back”** to alert others what is coming behind them.
 - Call out **“Car Up”, “Bike Up”, “Walker Up”, “Stroller Up”, “Dog Up”** to help other riders prepare for defensive moves.
 - Call out **“Slowing”** or **“Stopping”** as well as using a hand signal. Hand signals are the same for both actions so calling out helps to clarify intent.
 - Call out **“Glass”, “Rocks”, “Trash”** to alert riders to avoid upcoming hazards.
 - Call out **“Car Door”** when you see a car door opening.

4. Positioning

Share the road as a fellow motorist. Observe all traffic rules. Share your lane with motorists only when safe for the motorist to pass with both cyclist and motorist in the same lane. Otherwise, hold your lane with confidence. Share the trail, riding single file as far to the right as practical. Yield to pedestrians and pass when safe with a verbal call out of “Passing on your left”.

- **Ride single file**, as far right as possible and especially when motorists arrive from behind.
- **If you ride tandem** (two abreast), keep your wheels even with your fellow cyclist. This reduces the risk of handlebar entanglement. Always ride single file in traffic.
- Observe and obey **Traffic Rules and Regulations**.
- **Take your lane.**
 - Ride as far **right** as safe and possible.
 - **Use the bike lane**, when possible.
 - You are not required to ride in the gutter or even in the bike lane if it is unsafe.
 - If you take a **full lane**, which is your legal right, take it with bold confidence. This sends a clear message to motorists to wait until passing is safe.
 - Give **parked cars** a wide berth to avoid “dooring”. Drivers aren’t looking for cyclists when opening their doors.
 - At **intersections**, move into the right-hand lane position when going straight, avoiding the turn lane or the merge lane.
 - **Merge** well in advance into the left lane to turn left or use the **box turn**, which is crossing as a pedestrian.
 - Take the **right most left turn lane** position when the intersection has two left turn lanes. This puts you in the proper position after the turn.
- **Do not ride on sidewalks.** Motorists and pedestrians are not expecting you.
- **Stay well off the roadway or trail** when not in motion. Never block the bike trail or a traffic lane.

- **Missing the Light** - If members of your group miss the light and you plan to wait for them, do so well past the intersection and merge lanes and to the far right, off the road.
- **Draft with permission.** Drafting occurs when two cyclists ride in a tight single file line, with the back rider taking advantage of the slipstream created by the front rider. When leading, keep a steady pull. Both cyclists need to agree and be comfortable with this technique.
- **Keep a steady gap** between bikes and protect your front wheel. Leave ample room for emergency maneuvers.
- **Do not overlap wheels.** This is the second rider's responsibility. Keep a safe zone.
- Practice **soft peddling** by keeping your cadence going at all times. Brake using the feathering technique.
- Participate in **Pace Lines** only with the agreement and understanding of riders involved. Provide a steady pull at front, if you agree to a pace line:
 - Hold a constant pace, without gaps.
 - Hold a straight line.
 - Use signals when you intend to change the pace, drop to the back position or leave the line.
 - The above guidelines are good riding etiquette for all riders.

5. Hazard Avoidance

Stay alert and avoid distractions such as extended conversation while riding. Prepare in advance for how you will handle various hazards, including surface and visibility hazards, and practice avoidance techniques. Learn and practice evasive riding techniques. (Quick Stop, Quick Turn, Avoidance Weave, Rock Dodge)

- **Beware of surface hazards** - Wet roadways, slick algae or leaves, oil slicks pose a safety challenge. Alter your speed accordingly.
- **Announce** the presence of glass, debris, potholes with hand signals and/or callout.
- **DO NOT swerve** last minute to avoid a hazard if other riders are too close. Better a flat than a crash.
- **Reduce speed for tunnels!** Visibility can diminish instantly.
- **Avoid loose objects** and clothing that might tangle and interfere with the functioning of your bike.
- **Do not stop suddenly** if you drop something. Call out "slowing" and signal that you are moving over. Go back for the item when all is clear.
- **Keep conversations to a minimum.**

6. Passive Safety

Equip your bike and your body with function and safety in mind.

- **Wear a helmet ALWAYS.**
- **Wear glasses** for eye protection.
- **Wear cycling gloves.**
- **ABC Quick Check** – Conduct a review of the condition of your bike before each ride by checking **Air**, **Brakes**, **Chains**, cassettes, and derailleurs, and **Quick releases.**

- **Install lights and reflectors.** A white front light and rear red light or red reflector are required by law after dusk.
- Carry an **emergency card** with contact and medical information.
- **Sign in and out** at every ride with a legibly written name and phone number.
- **NEVER** use a cell phone or double earphones or play music through earphones while riding on BH rides.

7. Ride Protocol

- Groups leave the start points and aim to ride in clusters of no more than 6-8. This helps staggering the flow out of the parking lot, makes going through intersections more manageable, and is seen as friendlier to motorists. A group of 6-8 commands presence and visibility without too much inconvenience.
- Each rider contributes to the image and reputation of the Sacramento Bike Hikers with motorists, other riders and the community as a whole. Remain courteous at all times and seek to avoid altercations or negative conflict. Be especially pleasant and non-confrontational in parking lots where approval could be withdrawn, or our image tarnished.

8. In the Event of a Crash

The last page of the **Smart Cycling Quick Guide** includes the steps for handling a crash. Each Ride Leader carries a crash write-up form as well. This guide is small enough to be carried on rides.

- Make sure you are safe. Relax and collect yourself.
- If someone is significantly injured, call 911, the police or the park ranger.
- Identify others involved in the crash.
- Check the bike for damage.
- Document the crash and follow-up actions taken.

Collateral Items available to club members

